

Hey, just what is your workplace organization's purpose? Does your workplace have a *clear* purpose? Can folks inside and outside your organization readily identify your purpose and the degree of its fulfillment?

Recently, a short video news report profiled a retired pediatrician who, for all appearances, had no family. But he did have four dogs. The point of the video was the doctor's despondency in his retirement—yeah, he basically said every day was pretty much pointless to him now that he was retired.

The message of the video was clear as a bell: this pediatrician had fallen off a cliff, emotionally at least—from the very purposeful high as a key agent of the healing of children day after day to merely playing with his dogs. Apparently, this retiree is very much not unique...just drifting through everyday life without a sense of purpose. It's an affliction that's part of the malaise of modern life. But let's not miss the point here: he had a large sense of purpose when he was serving others—children and their families!

We're going to get to purpose in your workplace in just a bit. And to do that most effectively, let's lay some groundwork for an intentionally Christian take on the installation and practice of "purpose."

Of course, we all know there are a multitude of theologies that pepper the landscape of Christianity—obviously some are clearly much closer to the truth than others—and that means that Christians have different ideas about *purpose*. But let's start with the mega-idea that there should be little disagreement on for Christians: the serious Christian's purpose is to be others-centric—specifically as a great steward of their interests or needs. And the reason we can rest assured this is true is because that's exactly what the Persons of the Trinity do for one another and for humanity. Let's take a look at the flow of all that.

First, a few points on *God being love*. 1 John 4:16 (ESV) says, "God is love." This Bible verse clearly identifies the overarching, key attribute of God—yes, the most defining attribute governing His strategy, His actions, and His relationships. Now, God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, what we call the Trinity. (Matthew 28:19-20) And each Person of the Trinity clearly works to serve perfectly within the Trinity: the Son worked to reconcile humankind to the pleasure of His Father, the Holy Spirit serves and lifts up the Father and the Son, and in the book of Revelation the Father and Holy Spirit ensure that the Son is lifted up as the primary focus of adoration for eternity, as demonstrated. Yes, each Person of the Trinity consistently works to maximize the Trinity's meticulous, perfect stewardship of all humankind.

Second, a few points on God's loving reconciliation with humans. Because true mutual love requires a two-way street, God gave humankind the capacity to reject His commands and fail, which resulted in separation from God. But, hallelujah, to remedy this separation, Christ the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world to be a ransom for all people. This was the great purpose of Jesus in His stewardship of humankind—to reconcile the Father to every person who would call upon the name of Jesus for salvation. In doing that, Jesus was a steward for His Father and humanity in one grand Sacrifice.

Third, some thoughts on our loving response to God's sacrifice. The overarching purpose of every person who responds to God's offer to be reconciled to the Father through Christ is to then love God and to love their neighbors as themselves. But this godly, Biblical love here is not just a theory...*our love both for God and every other person on earth* is to be manifested by our going forth to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and all the earth to proclaim the Gospel (Acts 1:8) and our making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20).

Yes, believers who love their neighbors can demonstrate love best by being an ambassador for Christ—the Messiah—by proclaiming His Kingdom which can be entered only by responding in faith to God's grace. (Ephesians 2:8-9) And we know that "God our Savior...desires all people to be saved." (1 Timothy 2:4) In just this way, in fulfilling the Great Commission by proclaiming God's great love for all humankind, we can joyfully attach ourselves to God's great project of love for and stewardship of humankind by participating in our role in that full stewardship manifested by Christ at the Cross.

This...all this grand narrative...builds "*purpose*" for every Kingdom believer and every church sold out to accepting the challenge of being laborers. That is, the laborers that show up to fulfill God's great purpose

for His Kingdom citizens. No matter our vocation, no matter our geographic place, no matter our era...the overarching purpose is clear: love God and all our neighbors unto salvation and fruitful discipleship. Wow.

And in this unique earth-shaking narrative, we find such a grand secret to purpose in our leading and serving in all our workplace organizations, our families, our neighborhoods. That is—in every organization and in every circumstance—we intentionally become “others-centric”...and, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, discover the exact specifics as to our gifting and spheres of service.

Think back to that retired pediatrician for a moment. He apparently, truly had meaningful purpose in the healing process of children...and rightly so. But it seems he had no fallback position in the other spheres in his life: no ongoing others-centric stewardships for God, for family, for church, for neighbors. Perhaps that very pediatrician lives near you, a person needing a nudge from a neighbor like you with a vision and a blueprint from God about loving others.

OK, that's one person. But our opportunity for meaningful purpose is bigger than that, much bigger. So, here's the test: is your workplace organization absolutely abuzz every day with exciting opportunities to be others-centric in fulfilling meaningful stewardships...to serve the organization's customers very well...and also to serve the organization's owners very well...and also to serve fellow co-workers very well? Yeah, it really comes down to making many lives better every day, one-by-one.

This kind of definition and execution of purpose is the vital lifeblood of every vibrant organization. And it really starts at the top. Do you as CEO of your enterprise deliberately, intentionally make sure that every meeting, every contact each day is others-centric—yes, working constantly and without exception at the equipping, the encouragement, the providing of resources, the cheerleading of those around you? I'm reminded of that with the stories of Sam Walton, the founder and CEO of Walmart, purposefully traveling to each of those thousands of stores to mingle with the Walmart Associates in each town. Then he would return to Northwest Arkansas and drive his really old pickup truck around his farm. Yeah, *Sam “got it” when it comes to purpose...for his customers, his employees, and his stockholders.*

Oh, but you're not the CEO at your workplace? Well, then perhaps you're a Vice-President...or a department manager...or perhaps just a newbie team member: nothing can stop you from living out the purposes of meaningful stewardship in your peculiar spheres of influence. You know, the very ones that God has appointed you to for this season—your family, your workplace, your neighborhood?

Our deep understanding and appreciation and execution of purpose in our lives is what can help us through the most difficult times. Anchored in the knowledge that God has us where we are supposed to be in every particular season, we awake each morning with fresh resolve and Spirit-infused excitement that we have *purpose* to “do” this very day. Yeah, actually *several* purposes.

No, this is not trivial talk or shallow psychology bantered about over a cup of coffee—quite the opposite! These purposes that we must discern and then execute are the very rich fiber of life. *And each of these purposes fit into the overarching purpose of God: to love Him and to love our neighbors, the very door-opening to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God and invite others to serve the King of Kings, Jesus.*

But that's lonely, you might say, not many people doing that! Feels like you're the only one who “gets” it. Well, then, *that's exactly why you're at where you're at!* You are what the marketers call *differentiated*... you're different, in Christ, than others around you. As for the feeling of loneliness that so easily intrudes, we do well to remember the prophet of old, Elijah, who complained to God that he was only one in all Israel who was serving God. And what was God's rebuke? “I have 7,000 like you in Israel.” (1 Kings 19:18)

Yes, to be sure, unto this very day, God is orchestrating His willing followers into a tapestry of purpose-fulfilling for the sake of His great, eternal Kingdom. Yeah, God's overarching purpose is embedded in all our other purposes in life. Isn't that just awesome? That's because we serve a very awesome God...

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. Do you believe that God's overarching purpose is our loving God and loving neighbors unto witness for salvation? Why or why not? Specifically, if not, what is God's great purpose for His Kingdom workers as evidenced in Scripture?
2. Does your workplace have clear purpose that everyone is expected to buy in to? If so, what is the nature and extent of results conforming to that clear purpose? Be specific.
3. What does your church believe it is pursuing as its purpose? Is it clear? If so, what is the nature and extent of results conforming to that clear purpose? Be specific.